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ACIS -036/86
24 January 1986

USSR: CHEMICAL WEAPONS TREATY INITATIVE

In his 16 January statement Gorbachev called for intensified effort to conclude a multilateral treaty banning chemical weapons. He indicated Soviet willingness to declare the location of chemical weapon production facilities and stop production. The Soviets would be willing to negotiate toward procedures for the elimination of chemical weapons stockpiles. Once the treaty came into force, destruction of stockpiles would take place under international control including provision of on-site verification. (b)(1) (b)(3)

Comment: Gorbachev's language opens the possibility of an offer or a unilateral declaration of a freeze on the production of chemical weapons and a new Soviet willingness to consider further measures for international on-site verification.

Shevardnadze visit to the Conference on Disarmament would initiate a dual track propaganda and negotiation offensive in multilateral fora. Any actual proposal in the CW negotiations will probably not go beyond Gorbachev's statements but putting verification on the table will give them a propaganda advantage. The Soviets appear confident that concensus procedures and the reluctance of US allies and advanced Third World countries to submit to challenge inspection will allow them to manage the multilateral negotiations to protect their interests.